(c) and (d) Government of India is aware of and concerned about the implications of the growth of Maoist insurgency in Nepal becuase of the open border and the links between Nepal's Maoists and Left Wing Extremist and other groups in India. The Maoist insurgency in Nepal has also fuelled migration of Nepalese into our border States. Government of India has taken steps to strengthen security in border areas and the Sashstra Seema Bal has intensified its patrolling along the India-Nepal Border.

Double entry of Passports Enroute Agartala and Kolkata through Bangladesh

2527. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that the present double entry system of passports for the passengers plying between Agartala and Kolkata through Bangladesh is causing unusually long time for completion of the journey;

(b) whether Government are contemplating any proposal for direct journey between Agartala and Kolkata through Bangladesh without any break in the journey and change of vehicles,

(c) whether Government have worked out that the time of journey may be lessened by five to six hours that way; and

(d) the steps to be initiated by the Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Kolkata-Dhaka bus service has been operational since June 1999 while the Agartala-Dhaka bus service started in September 2003. Government of India is currently examining a proposal to start a direct bus service between Agartala and Kolkata *via* Dhaka.

(c) No formal study has been done by the Government of India as yet. However it is expected that the journey time would be reduced.

(d) The matter has not yet been taken up with the Government of Bangladesh.